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THE AGE OF SCIENCE.*

As much of the time of those who go forth from this institution to-day has been spent in the study of the sciences, it has seemed to me fitting to ask your attention to some considerations suggested by the phrase, 'This is the age of science.' I do not remember ever to have heard this statement questioned, much less denied, nor do I remember ever to have heard it satisfactorily explained. It sounds simple enough, and does not appear to call for explanation or comment, and yet I think it worth while to examine it a little more carefully than is customary, to see in what sense it is true. For in a sense it is true, and in a sense it is not true. The statement raises two questions which should be answered at the outset. These are: (1) What is science? and (2) In what sense is this the age of science?

First, then, what is science? Surely there can be no difficulty in answering this, and yet I fear that, if I should pass through this or any other audience with the question, I should get many different answers.

A certain lady, whom I know better than any other, has told me that, should she ever be permitted to marry a second time, she would not marry a scientific man, because scientific men are so terribly accurate. I often hear the same general idea expressed, and it is clear that accuracy is one attribute of science according to prevailing opinions. But accuracy alone is not science. When we hear a game of baseball or of whist spoken of as thoroughly scientific, I sup-

* Commencement address delivered at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, June 9, 1904.